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After the Day

Raine Bennett



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AFTER THE DAY

After the Day

*A Collection of
Post-War Impressions*

By
Raine Bennett

With an Introduction by
George Douglas
Literary Editor of the San Francisco Chronicle



Boston

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no 1

Dedication

O MEMORIED Thebes! Behold what fractured pile

Uprears its crumbling arches to the sky!

*Around forgotten plinths gaunt shadows lie
Traced by the gloaming moon. A columned aisle
Remains, bereft of frieze and peristyle —*

*All else is gone. Through wild mimosas sigh
The vagrant winds, and far, an ibis cry
Awakes the sinuous liquescent Nile.*

*Here men have sought obliterated golds,
Have wooed the ancient airs, and held their
 sway —*

*Whereat I closed mine eyes to silent molds
And wandering in fancy, linked Today
With Yesterday. Then all the Future holds
Rushed by me like a dream and passed
 away.*



Introduction

WHATEVER the reader may discover in the poetry of Raine Bennett, he cannot fail to recognize a pronounced individuality and a singular aptitude for dramatic expression. In the detail of form Bennett is not conventional, but his unconventionality in manner is the result of a symphonic cast of mind rather than the pose of a deliberate rebel. Sometimes he appears to be merely improvising with words, but in a few moments we have caught the central theme and are amazed at its magnetic sincerity.

What does it matter whether the verse be free or "fettered," "new" or "old" if the singer have both song and sincerity? It is the irritating pose, the trivial affectation of so many "free verse" bards, rather than their form against which the average reader rebels. Free verse begins, for some readers, with the suspicion of being an affectation, though as a matter of fact there is just as much and possibly more affectation in those formal lines the "music"

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of which conceals so much. Free verse is more transparent, and it is the merit of Bennett that what we see in his work is always worth the seeing.

Always there is some idea expressed through the medium of an emotion, and if the poet is more dramatic than lyric, it is because he is picturing rather than singing about war. He has written several dramas, and as a Californian has the distinction of being the first dramatist of his state to achieve the production of a manuscript at the Greek Theatre, Berkeley. It was a Bedouin tragedy entitled "The Talisman" and was well received by critics and the public at this, its second presentation, having been first produced by literati of Carmel at the "Forest Theatre." Another play, the "South Sea Idol," was given its initial production two years before at the Columbia Theatre in San Francisco. He distinguished himself while a student of law at Stanford University, by participating in the literary plays given by various dramatic societies there, and later interpreted roles in "Fire," an aboriginal drama by Mary Austin, and "Runymede" by William Greer Harrison. The latter apostrophised Bennet's charac-

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terization of King John in a dedicated poem. In addition, Bennett has lectured on the drama, paying special attention to the one-act play. His most recent work is included in this volume.

Mention is made of his dramatic experiences because of their bearing upon this collection of verse "After the Day," which he aptly describes as a series of "post-war impressions, written from the psychological viewpoint of a soldier permanently maimed and confronted with a world of the physically fit, with whom he must continue to be a competitor." These "after the day" or "nocturnal" impressions were all written with a view to their being read aloud, and as dramatic reading they take on a singularly magnetic quality.

The war did not make Bennett a poet, but it revealed the poet in him, and to himself, as much as to his readers. He saw things so clearly and felt so strongly he wanted to set everything down precisely as seen and felt. His work took the form of free verse not because he looked upon that form as final, but because he did not want to leave anything of importance out of the picture or to put in anything merely to fill.

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He wanted the perfect word, whether it happened to be a dactyl or a spondee, hence his "free" or new verse. If the thing seen or the thing felt is more to you than the conventional melody of words, you will more than admire the poetry of Raine Bennett.

This does not mean that he is indifferent to the music of words. On the contrary you will find line after line construed with perfect ear, and in fact the melody is broken only when the thought or emotion so takes possession of him that he refuses to vary the expression to fit the cadence.

The poem of the series which is entitled "Peace" was originally printed in the San Francisco Chronicle. As a result of its publication quite a number of people wrote offering to care wholly or in part for the poet's material wants! The story of the wounded soldier had moved them to the limit of their generosity. It was praised by Witter Bynner, and other poets.

The remaining themes are nearly all on war, and all have distinctive merit as the earnest song of a new singer. In some of them, Bennett gives quite a new meaning to free verse, *for he*

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shows that it can be free to be perfectly beautiful, melodic, and sometimes even pretty, though strength is his dominant note.

GEORGE DOUGLAS,

*Literary Editor of the
San Francisco Chronicle.*

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Peace

SHOULD poets be sent to battle—
Drafted into service with a gun,
Or mustered out for service with a pen?
That is the question old friends are asking,
And I am yearning to answer them, I who lost
My legs in Alsace, and my heart in Lorraine.

No one is unkind to me; which I take to be
A fine deference, because in Lille
I was a prisoner of War.

As though a dream of childhood had been
 anticipated,
I am allowed by my officials
To watch a flock of Merino sheep
On a wide farm in the West—
While idling the hours I trace verses
On the inside of wrappers embellishing cans
Of Bordeaux mackerel, caught in Monterey.
After this manner I strive, if ever so vainly,
To unburden my mind of its terrors,
Seeking to forget the scars inflicted on me
Because I fought for my Country.

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A quaint adage used by my ancestors read :

“A poet is born, not made —”

But that was long before the war.

I, a mutilated soldier, abandoned by all
Former associations, tent pals, canteen loungers,
Officers of the guard, patrols, and Durham —
Have attained the plains for solace, and am glad !
For I was once a yokel from the hills
With a penchant for rhyme and Latin meters,
So they have carried my body to this sheltering
Laurel in the glen, and have equipped me
With the crooked staff of a shepherd —

Even a poet without legs

Has his usefulness !

The fragrant airs in dalliance

Blow over miles of May—

What soldier of this newer day

Would not follow them, these little winds,

These whispers from the Infinite that formerly

Meant nothing, but now have many voices ?

See the hogs, contented and at ease !

Do you think there is no joy in observing

Life, instead of Death ?

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There are horses at pasture, and cows grazing—
What do they know of explosives?
Yet how many of these lie rotting
On the fields of the fleur-de-lis!

In the distance,
On the plowlands a whistling teamster
Guides his sorrels, and across the fallow
A jackass brays! What is more ridiculous than
that jester,
Whose ears, and strange noises, vainglorious
laughs
And useless prancings are so Hohenzollern?
With all his legs, who would change places with
him?
Not I! His entertainments do not appeal to me—
I would rather remain a poet.

When fragile violets are plucked from their
shadows in the forest,
Knowing full well they will die in the sunlight,
Do you think less of them for their inability
To keep pace with the garish day?
This is my lonely predicament. May I feel how-
ever,
On the one theory that flowers about to die
Are nevertheless welcome—

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My thoughts may please you, like violets in a
vase

During their little hour!

Yet were not all these particulars in my land-
scape

Meant for you and me?

When the fresh blossoms of clover, dew-
besprent and young,

Upturn their purple harvest to the skies and
glowing insects,

Do they not smile at heaven,

And at you and me, as well as the butterflies?

But yesterday a troop of bees

Maneuvered across the perfumed grasses

Laden with the spoils of their campaign —

And I had wished all booty

Were as sweet!

When a lark with melodious acclaim

Soars through the dawning clouds,

Is it not to awaken me, as well as you?

These are my consolations!

Here, watching silent acres

Verdant from the tears of stars,

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And cool meadows reaching from me
Through emerald seas,
Sheep browsing, and the far murmur of reeds
By a winding river —
All of these are better awards for service
Than a medal of bronze,
Or a special dispensation from the Pope.
They were better, and meant more,
Before I enlisted.

I had my feet,
Which I remember were considered necessary at
the time —
Encased in strong military boots ; my jeans were
Thrown aside by the sergeant. Thereupon a
smart uniform
Was fitted to my figure. The sunburned, straw
sombbrero
Now protecting my ears became a felt hat with
tassels,
And I was dubbed a “recruit,”
Which is the nucleus of a soldier.

So my dreams
Of threshing hay, and the golden glory of the
moon

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Rising at dayfall over burnished waves of
grain —

Were shattered by deracinating cannon,
And “shell shock” has eclipsed the vision of old
summers.

I saw a raven fly over sleeping battlefields
In the gray mists of dawn, and there was a glow
On its wing, as the passing night
Draped in malignant shadows the last vestige
Of its flight. I shuddered when this occurred,
Because it forboded the dark couriers of the
Future.

All the rhymes of my boyhood rattled together
Like the discord of foreign brasses,
The bugler no longer tongued decasyllabically,
And I became a strange creature in the ranks
Continuing to fall out of step
Without apparent reason;

If I had said
The cause was in my soul
They would have laughed at me,
And called it a “pun” —
Which, in literature, is perpetrated by a slacker.

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I have been in service, deep into it,
Forgetting all but my country, and risking all
As I would do again; but I have seen
The body of a poet in Flanders, and I know
There were words stopped in his mouth
That could herald peace, and eloquence
Died in his veins, with beauty's vaster meanings.
There were exaltations unattained, achievements
locked

On his pale lips, and songs ineffable
Forever stilled. I am aware of this, for there
was a whirr

As of ghostly pinions heard thundering afar
By several comrades, when they approached his
remains

Clinging to the wire entanglements
Above our trenches.

A soldier who has fought
Against the offensive called Death comes face to
face

With Poetry, as a spirit does its Maker.

If you doubt these morals wrought from No
Man's Land,

Let the gaunt survivors of battlefields
Tell their stories!

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Ah, there shall be heartrending pity then,
Commingle with that anguish all animals must
feel

When hunted down, for no wrong-doing
Save the insolence of Life.

There shall be mystery, and romance,
Grand sacrifice, and martyrdom recounted,
And what empyreal glory men experience
In the flying havoc of war!

Let the wounded tell of their bleeding,
And the hush of silence closing in on them;
Speak to a convalescent aviator, for instance,
A birdman who has heard
The eagle scream his triumph from the skies —
Ask him to recall the long afternoons, bound in
cotton and gauze,
The gassed maniacs crying in cots,
And those faithful soothsayers, the nurses,
Moving so carefully, so quietly!

When a nurse smiles
One never knows whether it is a rule
Of the Red Cross, or the Eternal Feminine
Striving to conceal a multitude of griefs,
Knowing there is no room for laughter
In all that desolation.

AFTER THE DAY

Would that the splendid dead
Could divulge their adventures —
Reveal the immutable secrets of God,
And dwell no more in unknown, platonic
heights!

There were fine tales made for children,
On the flaming fields of France:
Tales of cutthroats, and merciless barbarism,
Of robbery, pillage and destruction;
Yarns of strange murders committed at sea
By men who strove to win great wars
By drowning mothers, and speeding infants
heavenward
Before their time. Then will follow glorious
narrative,
And how most famous Admirals forbade
The encircling oceans to these brigands of the
deep,
While strong, sabred veterans, scarred by many
trials,
Hurled millions of crusaders over there!

I have heard the lusty, silver shouting
Of a regiment cruising Eastward: "Free-
dom!"—

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O, that was a battle cry; and I was there,
All of me, to make the world safe for Democracy!

Now come the last scenes of all:
Their settings are of gray sunsets,
With streaks of red, to light the naves
Of famous cathedrals, and cities old in story.
Drifts of smoke roll through the village streets
Commingle the secret souls of men
Like incense curling from twilight tapers
Into the mauve beyond! Thus you will have
Before your mind's eye a picture
No artist would dare to paint, and no writer
Shall ever describe —
Only a wounded soldier screaming in the dark
Has ever seen these things, and you, and you,
Will be able to see them only in his eyes!

So all shall come to know some day
That physical deprivation
Is not too heavy a burden to carry
For having gone over the trenches
In France!

L'Envoi

Even a poet without legs
Has his usefulness.

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Raoul's Last Nocturne

MUSICIANS!

Let me tell you the story of Raoul
The violinist —
Gun-wadder of the 144th Field Artillery
The good soldier,
The violinist!

It was late
In the Argonne forest,
And he was playing a quaint air of Persia;
Surely, you remember it:

“O moon of my delight, that
knows no wane —”

The trees drew closer
While we listened,
And the wood-wind's breath
Fell languishing
In the arms of the shadowed branches.

Arias from many an outlander's retreat
Lulled the gloaming

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With dulcet cadences of peace,
And the sun had gone
In gorgeous conflagration
Behind the smoking battlements of France.

He raised his antique instrument and bow,
Standing at ease against the barricade;
And we, so tired of strife
Were gathered there
To hear the strange tales
Fashioned by his Art.

Still! A moment hesitant,
And then on slow wings lilting
By wistful strains
And semblances obscure
He struck some prelude
Kindred to the hour,
And drew a thousand visions from the Dark.

Awhile he stood,
Improvising themes on happy valleys,
Pastorals, and sylvan inference,
When hold! The trees —
Were *those* the trees of Argonne?
Nay? Then, say —

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Whence came that fragrance of Sierran air,
That westering, deep draught from overseas?

.

Before our eyes
The purple ranges loomed,
And snow-clad mountains thrilling to the stars!

We found ourselves in canyons
Deep, and crimsoning aflame;
Were lost on dim slopes
Where the cedar grieves —
And roamed beneath the confidence of pines!

We heard the primal moon-song of coyotes,
Saw gaunt shadows
Creeping on the mesa —
Saw camp fires
Gleaming through the dusk. . . .

Heard the requiem of rain
Across the sage!

We saw him swayed
Through those insistencies
Conferred by Self, impassionate and sad;
His was a message

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Stirred in lyric shades
For us alone —

It was like the presence
Of some furtive Soul
Searching the wide, white heavens
For its mate,
And all the plaintive yearning
Of the strings,
Rose in answer
To our lonely hearts!

We lived, and died,
And lo. . . .

—*awake in bourns*
Beyond all present understanding:

We hear the early carols of Aidenn
Hear the matins
Of orioles homing in Eolian dawns. . . .

Lydian measures,
Heedless of the moment —
And melodies exotic
Follow fugues
Hushed by the gloom of Ages;

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*We are in silent wonder of that man
Who can with subtle fingers
And his bow
Draw poignant meanings
From the wilderness.*

*On meads untenanted
By graves —
Peal chords of April's green gladness!*

*Where the harvest, weary ox-wain creaked,
Our swart artillery
Scars the tongueless sod;
And in and out their wheels
Dark poppies blow —
And over them
Marauding birds go by!*

*Pandean pipes
Forgotten in the glades
Rejoice once more
Through the drear solitude of Argonne.*

*And we stay
Like a gathering of Bacchanalian gods
Hearing the wine-songs
Of old Arcady!*

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Slender reeds
In favored places wrought,
Spoke of a spell
Transmuted by the elves
That men may seek forever
To no end;
So touched by lips
All wanton wooed, and wild,
They make young lilies
Tremulous at eve,
When every lolling lotus
On the lake
Yearns for somnolent dews!

We heard soft flutes
Ineffable, and sweet,
And trolls their pretty signals trumpeting;
Satyrs insubordinate, and sprites
Laughing unduly —
And many gnomes cavorting out of ranks!

We heard the dryad's intimate tattoo,
And sylphic fifes
Blown faintly from the hills. . . .

We heard their tiny timbrels
At dayfall,

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So seeking,
By articulated wile and rustic whim,
To captivate the iris-hidden streams —
With murmurous delight
To fascinate
Those vales of startled Echo
Where tremble and begins
The intimation of Elysian Song.

Adagios complained from dawn to dawn
Against the rude reluctances of Night;
There too, Andantes
Holding trysts celestially remote —
Sung with their certain diffidence, aspiring
Toward the pale ports of the Pleides.

While over all, in pæns, on, and on,
Like some vast oratorio
The exultant orbs
Of Evening communed
In far, illusive music
Of the Spheres.

So did the bleak, unhallowed wood
Avail surcease enchanting
From the gyves of war,

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And we were lead by vagrant Genius
To those far heights
That 'mightily divide
The sightless from the Sight.

We were his true, attentive audience
The while he wove
A myriad rhapsodies
Into the loom of one Tonality;
Calling rare voices
From the East,
And North, and South,
And West, in motives blent
From out the singing gardens of the World.

“What was that, Sergeant?”

*“Nothing, you fool!
Let him play!
Some leaves
Scattered by a random shot;
The guns of our friend, the Enemy
Are speeding
Dispatch bearers to Mars!
Never mind —
Let him play!”*

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Then in a surge of minor harmony
It seemed his bow swept suddenly to tears --

We caught
The secret pleadings of salt tides,
And that sadness
In the ocean's elegies;

So came dreams Holy,
And glimpses
Lost in sleep
Of ancient galleons
On the farthest main,
Shrouded argosies
At anchor —
The surf booming
On shores unknown. . . .

Coasts storm-crumbled,
And cliffs
Where the gray morn breaks;

The heave of an offing
Swelling, sweeping;
Combers crashing,
Foaming, flowing —

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Then mist-ridden crests,
And a drifting spar . . .
And the sea's face
Flung with spray!

You who have prayed
When the mad typhoon
Gnashed its teeth
In the biting gale —
You who have heard
Most tortured waves
Cry out to the frenzied skies —
You would have plunged
Through those wild waters,
Wilder yet with flood
Of Sound tempestuous;
You would have understood, somehow,
While he played. . . .

You who have known
The rimrock ways,
And the trails of the unbought West
Who have staked your bivouac
In the heart of the hills, or have closed
Your lids on the desert's loneliness,
And the long twilight, on the cherished plains

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In the trove of Youth's lost years —
You would have thought
Of those untrammeled haunts
So far from Argonne (Christ, how far!)
And yet so near
To something in your souls;

You would have listened
While he played,
Your lips mute and your throat
In sorrow locked —
While the eyes of comrades
And your own
Brimmed full with memories!

.
"Sergeant! What has happened?
Good God! My shoulder. . . .
Blood . . . nothing . . . but . . . blood . . .

"Raoul! Where are you?
Raoul —"

"Shut up, you fool!
He was interrupted
By one of Fritz's shells;
I found his helmet

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*A few moments ago
And here,
You may have it —*

*A fragment
Of his fiddle!”*

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The Shell Crater

I HAD been wandering
Through the forest of Epinoy —

And in the wild, mid region of my walk
I paused beside a shell crater.
It had filled
With turgid downpour, drainage, and the dew
From silent mounds, unnumbered and unnamed.

It resembled the visage of a tarn,
Over which a cold moon rising, traced
Most strange, fantastic figures;
And the trees of Epinoy
Sighed close to the mouth of the crater.

A voice
Fell through the wistful wood.
It was indistinct,
And not from the branches;
It was low,
Like the lament of a spirit. . . .

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Long I paced, long
In the drifting mists,
Alone, in the Silence.

Nothing
Was distinguishable there,
Nothing beyond a desolation
On the water —
Nothing save those figures, made fantastic
By the moon's saffronic glaze.

Then I glanced
Above the crater —
And saw that the trees of Epinoï
Swayed with a dark unrest.
Whereat, I concluded the voice
Was a sadness on the wind;
Or some sylvan grief
Such as woodlands know
When the last leaves die —
When the fronds fall, fluttering
From their gnarled arms!

But the sigh continued, like the voice
Of a spirit lamenting.

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Finally, the surface of the tarn
Stirred by the late insistence of the breeze —
Wrinkled its visage
And danced, with a melancholy rhythm,
Almost in trend, I fancied
To the whisper of its shadows;
While the moon, shone solemnly
And cold!

Then a far thunder reverberated
— It was nocturnal canonading
From artillerists unknown —

Swiftly, the red-tongued lightning
Licked skyward, its sudden prongs
Stabbed the trees of Epinoy —
And their limbs, their bereaved branches
Groaned from wounds inflicted by the storm;
And there was a multitude of sighs.

Leaning forward, striving to discern
What sorrow upward welled
From the crater —
To my terror, I beheld
The haggard features of a soldier.
His drenched hair

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Lapped by the undulations,
Writhed, like kelp around his forehead;
And the lips were parted
As though his soul had flown
While struggling to articulate
Some unrequited prayer! A glimpse —
And the chill waters of the tarn
Closed over him forever.

The surface
Resumed its sullen languor —
The winds
Abated utterly, and the trees
Of Epinoy communed no more,
Save in the low, least murmurs
Of a forest.

I had been wandering,
And in the wild, mid region of my walk
This incident occurred;

*Yet so surely as God
Lets me tell you,
I saw naught but mine own reflection
In the crater!*

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Before Cambrai

A SHARPSHOOTER, before the taking of
Cambrai
Aimed carefully at my silhouette, while I stood
On sentinel duty, under the stars.

His bullet tore through one eye and out of the
other —

So now, when lately the moon
Mounts heavenward, and the myriad constella-
tions

Look down from their undaunted heights,
I wonder if they see, in that vast darkness of
theirs,

Any more than one whose individual night
Has closed him from them forever!

I have walked forth on June mornings,
When the great orb of the Sun
Observed every idle cloud in passing;
I have turned my face up to those aerial
meadows,

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Marveling if all the vague translucencies of Day
Were akin to them, as utter blackness
Is to me, or if the dews of dawn
Are ever like the blindness of tears!

Yet to one who dwells in shadow
There comes, sooner or later,
A reverence for the depths of things;
And I have had such visions
That few with eyes can know —
Learned of the inner sources that illumine,
And soothed my hours with opalescent dreams!

There is a steadfast gleaming
In the lightness of my heart,
And I have seen the beacon of my Soul.

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Le Poilu

DRENCHED to the skin, knee-deep in mud,
Disheartened, all but dead —

This was the condition, most pitiable and true,
Of a small detachment at the Marne.

Among them, yet not one of a group,
But standing aside (as I have noticed heroes do),
Was a young, French guardsman.

They were anxious, those exhausted defenders,
And their faces twitched from the torment of
suspense;

Some were chilled by long exposure,
Others flushed with fever,
All were anxious, these bleeding patriots,
And most of all, the young French guardsman,
As he stood in the gathering shadows
Watching every slight manœuvre of the enemy
Through a space between the trench-sacks.

After a lapse of silence, he whispered something:
It was in no way a signal,
And would have aroused little attention
Were it not for the restive fervor of the man
And that strange gaze in his eyes —

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As he stood in the gathering shadows
Watching between the trench-sacks.

“What did he say?” ventured one.

“Look at his haggard features!” said another.

“I know the type; he will die fighting!” concluded a third.

And all of his tired comrades,
Peered at the young French guardsman.

Again his lips moved:

“*They shall not pass!*” he breathed;

And the winds of evening caught that phrase,
Whirling it like a leaf at twilight
Into the heart of France!

You have already heard it,
It has become familiar to you
Afar East; and to you, afar West —

And to the clans of the North,
And to the tribes of the South.

But no one knows that a young French guards-
man

Was first to utter those words, drenched to the
skin,

Knee-deep in mud, disheartened, all but dead —
As he stood in the gathering shadows,
In the grim dusk of the Marne.

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Departure

*FAREWELL! The path I take
May have a scarlet ending,
Or blaze in a wide, wild radiance
Unknown to us;
Nevertheless, farewell!*

My knapsack is adjusted —
All the implements of war
Are strapped to my shoulders,
And on my heart rides a stone
To balance these securely.

*The path I take
May have a scarlet ending —
Or lie under gold, rich skies
Spun marvellously
Of dawns, and days, and darks
In splendor flung
With glory unsurmised!*

Yet you will be dreamed of there,
And I
Shall have fine memories of mirth,

AFTER THE DAY

Of sudden caresses
And the low-mooned bayou,
All holy with quiet, and your whispers!

*Farewell! The path I take
Leads on to bleeding valleys
Shrapnel gashed, and furtive with the ghosts
Of many travellers. . . .*

My boots are oiled for service,
My helmet is lustrous and new;
My rifle's fit, and the flags
Untattered where I go —

But if a moveless, strange black horror
Comes uprushing to my eyes,
And I am gone
Into the enduring dusts from you —
Yet will I take your image far with me,
Remembering
Your undaunted loneliness, and your smile.

*And some night
You will find me in your arms,
Pleading —
For the eventual white flame
Of your lips!*

AFTER THE DAY

Antoine, the Birdman

ANTOINE was an aviator
Before the storming of Ypres.
But after that day, when he fell from the
clouds —

He assumed another rôle,
And was known as an invalid
At the base Hospital.

Some terror of the altitudes
Deranged his mind,
Lucky fellow though he was —
To have caught his plane
In a draught of air
One sheer league from the soil!

I recall at the time
How we rushed to congratulate him,
But he was gone —
A strange, sad creature
Looked at us instead, regarded us queerly
As we lead him away by the arm.

AFTER THE DAY

After a few days
We noticed he continually
Referred to himself as a "bird"
And insisted with surprising eloquence
That we need only to "exert our Will"
To fly. Poor Antoine —
The mania of the heights
Had gripped him surely,
And though we sought to pacify his soul
We knew nevertheless, we knew!

He argued .
With rare ingenuity —
Saying an eagle had explained matters
Above the clouds!

An alert, and dapper aviator
Was Antoine —
Small, wiry of limb,
And agile, to a degree scarcely human.
His nose was aquiline,
Like a hawk's —
And in the quick comprehension of his gaze
He seemed to take
A birdseye view of us. . . .

AFTER THE DAY

After his accident
He walked no more,
But hopped, as it were,
From place to place
With his arms crooked at the elbow —
Like pinions.

His voice was shrill,
And the words he used
Were chirped across the veranda
From his perch
On the wide, porch railing.

It all happened last night —
And I shudder now, to divulge this information :

Someone had conceived the idea
Of a masquerade for our convalescents.
Those not too incapacitated
Had nurses for their partners,
Visitors, and such ;
While others of us, in chairs
And on crutches, watched the dancers.

Suddenly the room
Was darkened by a sweeping Shadow —

AFTER THE DAY

And lo, Antoine the birdman
Had made his entrance, garbed as a falcon !

The costume was excellent —
Huge, ebony wings
Extended celestially
Down from his shoulders.
And from the feet (that were claws)
Upward, his body was encased
In glistening, black feathers.

His eyes
Shone over the beak of him
Like a condor's, burning
With malignant lustre ;
And so amazing was the impression he made,
So bizzarre, so true, so in keeping with his
mind —

That the unexpected appearance,
Like an apparition silencing us a moment
By the shadow cast,
Was as suddenly greeted
With long, and sincere applause.

Thereat, pluming himself,
He stepped sedately to the centre of the hall

AFTER THE DAY

And claimed, *for his first dance*
The Chaplain's daughter.

This was not madness —
It was genius!
She had come
Dressed as a canary,
A timid, yellow thing; a small
Winsome maid, a "bird" girl
Fluttering lightly
Over the shining surface of the floor.

The music of a waltz began,
And to its lilting measures swiftly
Swooping, whirling, round and round
They glided, scarcely touching
The tips of their toes to the wax.

Louder sounded the violins,
Wilder encircling
The canary and the falcon flew,
Until the panel doors
Blew open at a gust of wind —

Whereupon, with startling decision
He clutched her in his claws
And darted away, through the Night.

AFTER THE DAY

“Splendid!” we applauded;

“A superb effect — ”

But the Chaplain
Was pale, and we suppressed
Our approval, subdued
Our cheering, wondering why —

Then a wild fear
Leaped in our hearts
With the realization that he was *mad* —
And the cliffs
A stone’s throw away!

The remembrance
Of his insistent argument
That flying
Was an ability of the Will
Came to us, as we saw his figure
Swallowed up by the gathering darkness;
Came to us as we watched him
Half hopping, half soaring,
In flight over the intermediate grasses —
Making for the promontory.

A chorus of cries arose —
And all of us, on sticks, and crutches,

AFTER THE DAY

In wheel-chairs, and rockers,
Stumbled, fell, limped, rushed
With united impulse
After the fleeing falcon, with one thought
To save the little canary
Palpitating, trembling, helpless in his talons!

The edge of the cliff was reached
With nothing there, and all
Our efforts were in vain.

Hesitating, some of us imagined
We discerned a bleeding, inert mass
On the far rocks below —

And some who gazed into the sky
Thought they heard
Growing fainter, and fainter,
The whirr of enormous wings. . . .

AFTER THE DAY

Found in a Diary

I AM hiding in a shell-hole.
There is no possibility of escape. For hours
The whining missils overhead
Have told me that!

Yet Hope, like the last drop in a canteen,
Has made it easier to wait. . . .

Sooner or later, a spray of shrapnel
Will end it all;
That howitzer's puff of smoke in the clearing —
Will it offer some delectable of Death?
Or one of those mortars,
Two hundred yards away. . . .

A day, a night, another day, and now
The fingers of dusk are closing around me —
They are creeping over this waste of mud, and
debris,
They are moving, *they are reaching for me!*

AFTER THE DAY

A shadow is an evil thing,
And there is an uncouth leer
In the eyes of Evening.

The "seventy-fives" "whizzbangs"
"Skodas" "eighty-eights"
"Nine-twos" —

All of these scream by,
Sobbing to themselves, yauping to one another
For a day, a night, and a day!

Suppose one should spurt through my skull, sud-
denly,

Blast a shoulder off,
Tear my legs to shreds, or plow
An exit through my lungs —

Yet after some such shattering
I might live; *Jesus!*
I might *want* to live. . . .

No! no! no! These hours of waiting
Have earned me more than that!
I am entitled to my throw of the dice —
I deserve to die,
I have a right to die!

AFTER THE DAY

Ah, let me be!

Why do you follow me through the air,
You shrieking, weeping creatures —
Do you want to find me, gash me, grind me
Into the drifts, and the dusts?

Why do you cry when you pass me. . . .
Does such rude traveling hurt lead?
I wonder if it grieves iron
To disturb the blameless breeze —
I wonder if it pains iron
To hiss through a fair, West wind!

Should I be hit, I would not survive —
(Something in me rebels at the thought of sur-
viving!)
It might come by any direction,
Or be hurled earthward, from the clouds.

Would you want to be wounded, unexpectedly?
No man does!
The thing to do is to arrange for death,
To make careful preparation. . . .

My bayonet is very sharp; it could fit in my
chest, to the hilt. . . .

AFTER THE DAY

Suppose some damned explosive found me
here. . . .

The shock, the suddenness, the utter agony,
From something to nothing, in one blinding
instant!

No man would wait for that —
No man *can* wait for that!

So why should I delay matters?

Why should I be waiting
When there is no chance,
No way of escape from here . . .
And should I rise, I would fall!

A day, a night, another day, and now . . .
My bayonet is very sharp!
It could fit in my chest, to the hilt —
And if it does not, some Hun's hot bullet will. . . .

Who wants to be torn, from limb to limb,
By a Hun's infernal device —
Who would wait to be *shot*
When your own bayonet is clean, and keen?

God! I can stand it no longer —
The terror of a midnight mad with flame,
The fear of another morning. . . .

AFTER THE DAY

There!

I have plunged it . . .

Fitted it . . . in my chest . . . to the hilt!

You will say I was afraid . . . to . . . die . . .

Afraid to die . . . all suddenly . . . to . . . die . . .

I was . . . afraid . . . to . . . live . . .

I . . . was . . . afraid . . .

To . . . die!

AFTER THE DAY

Soldier, Answer Me!

SOLDIER, answer me!
What are you fighting for?
Is it the archaic joy of battle
Or the conceit of arms;
Is it a desire to flaunt your courage
In the face of Providence,
Is it for the bauble of Popularity?

*It is some of these things, Man,
But most of all
It is an heritage in my heart
That stirs
At the wild roll of drums!*

Soldier, answer me!
What are you bleeding for?
Is it a ruse to dodge the slings of Fate
Is it a chance you take
In the game of War —
Is it a play
For the indulgence of a contrite world;

AFTER THE DAY

Is it a profanation of the body
For the sake of the Soul?

*It is some of these things, Man,
But most of all,
It is a glad awakening
At the cry of bugles!*

Soldier, answer me!
What are you dying for?
Is it to justify the error
Of politicians,
Is it to glorify some leader —
Is it a satiation
At the vain pursuits, and mockeries of men;
Are you indulgent only to yourself,
Having no desire to share
Your life with others —
Do you long for the solid comfort
Of a grave?

*It is some of these things, Man,
But most of all
It is because I was born
On the soil of my forefathers;
I am a young custodian*

AFTER THE DAY

*Of their lands.
War is the privilege
Of my race —
Birth gave it me,
And Death
Will not take it away!*

AFTER THE DAY

Pere Lachaise

YOU, who have been to France —
While in Paris
Did you go to the cemetery
Of Pere Lachaise?

On entering,
Up the cypress avenue
To the “Monument of the Dead”
By Bartholomé,
Do you recall the figures
Full of pathos
On that sarcophagus of limestone?
They represent Humanity
Pressing forward
To the door of the tomb!

That marble chapel
Erected to Thiers —
And the tribute
To Abelard and Héloïse!
Under a Gothic canopy

AFTER THE DAY

Those statues are shaded,
Symbolizing the love and misfortune
Of two whose plight
Has been a theme
For many poets.

Here is the last, surviving evidence
Of famous authors,
Dramatists, and composers —
Remembered by an image,
A medallion, or a bust ;
And within the gloom
Of every shrouded thing
A moral lies !

It is fair to see
With what fine reverence the French
Honor their men and women
Of genius, whose work
Has made the immortality
Of a Nation.

Here, where the quaking aspen
Trembles windward,
And the yew plays, quietly,
(Greener, far, than those

AFTER THE DAY

On the Champs Elysées!)
Repose the dreamers
Of unburied Science,
Philosophy, and Art!

So musing, on all
That is, or was —
And all
That shall not be again,
I realized (as my footfall
Crushed the future of a flower!)
How each solitary path
Holds the mould of men whose fame
Survives them,
And of women more beautiful
Than many passing in the sun.
And I saw, too,
The mounds of children
Whose cheeks alas, held
No sententious tinge
Of their dawns, nor any glimmering
From those far gates where silently
The shadows come, and go!

You, on furlough from Chateau Thierry
Did no message come to you,

AFTER THE DAY

Born on the restive airs —
None of their words, no answer
To stir your heart's lone questioning?

I heard young zephyrs
Holding secrets here —

And so arose a murmuring at dusk
That told of Kings
Who found antiquity
One everlasting Night;
And some of Thought's nobility
Had passed,
And those who searched Within —
Whereat the world
Knew them no longer!

These souls were great,
And each for greatness sued —
Yet one by one they faltered on the Way
And their voices
Are become nocturnal echoes, flung
From star to star.

Some toilers gain late laurels
For their pain;

AFTER THE DAY

Yet when Success
Its bounty would bestow,
Time clutches for the wreath —
And uses it
To decorate a tomb!

I think there is no grief
So fathomless
As the least lily
Pleading by a wall;
Nor anything
More sad than vines
Clinging to an old friend's monument.

They seem to have their transitory moments,
Their unfamiliar, small ambitions,
Seeking from enclasped granite
Some eminence, there to gaze
Upon the aspect of Eternity.

What more could you attain,
Or these poor, inert mortals?
The smallest fern
Does well,
And they fared ill; and you also
Are but a minion
Of Life's old disasters.

AFTER THE DAY

O, men of Hope
And men of urging Will!
And you who dwell
In Wisdom's halls,
So lonely, and so high!

There is no leaf
Inferior to you —

And where your consecrated deeds abide,
Your prejudice, and pride,
And where your votive tapers flare
Against the passing Dark;
Age will beckon with a withered finger —
Wherever you are
Its cold insistency will be. . . .

On the final pyres
No sacrifice
Will answer for your Self,
No other heart
Lie in your cerements!

But fruitage of the twilight
Are men's souls,
And though the race be hard

AFTER THE DAY

The winning near, or far,
A graveyard claims each weary contestant.

If you hesitate, doubting
Because I was afraid at Cantigny —
Go to the resting place
Of those
From whom you are descended;
Listen to the evening's searching breeze
When it drifts
Into sepulchres, and out again,
When it curls under the eaves of dark
 mausoleums
And departs
With a far whisper of despair. . . .

If you understand its errand,
If you know what it seeks, and where it goes —
You will not be forgotten.

AFTER THE DAY

Croix De Guerre

FROM fields of carnage
I brought her souvenirs:
A beryl signet
Torn from one the Emperor
Had honored;
Also, a case of old Damascus
And some trifles
Gathered at twilight
From those
Whose throats were stopped in dust.

*"But these are not treasures," she said;
"To have value
They must be gems of fire!"*

Then, hesitating,
I displayed
The small, bronze *croix de guerre*
With which a famous man
Had decorated me,
Saying it was for a little thing I did —
At Chalons.

AFTER THE DAY

*“But it is not of gold,” she replied;
And alas, the ribbon is stained!”*

Whereat I went away
Thinking these unfit presents for the one
I loved.

And for hours
I wandered through the streets
Until someone
Touched my arm in the shadows:

*“That medal on your chest, mon cherie —
Tell me about it!”*

A long time she listened,
And that night
I entered the door of Happiness.

AFTER THE DAY

Wounded

SING me a song, *Fleurette!*
I have taken the medicine
As *Messieur le Docteur*
Prescribed it —
And my pain . . . my pain . . . is sleeping!”

“Bien, chérie!
I know a little French one,
Taught me in the Convent of the *Sacré Coeur*:

“Petals falling,
Breezes calling
Blossoms from the grain;

Lilies sighing
Violets crying—
Weeping in the rain!

The moon an incense-breathing censer swings
Across the drowsy foliage of Night —
O, by the casement sings a maiden, O!

AFTER THE DAY

The winds from scented gardens pass, like wings
Of many moths in strange, nocturnal flight —
O, by the casement sings a maiden, O!

Her song is of the petals
As they fall,
Her voice is in the breezes
As they call
To blossoms from the grain,
Lilies sighing
Violets crying —
And every heart soft weeping
In the rain!"

*"Very good, Fleurette.
Now, if you will turn out the light —
I believe I can rest for a while."*

AFTER THE DAY

A Whisper at the Gate

“ *I LOVE you!*
He would say, so often
Under the trees by the garden gate;
But he went to the front, Monsieur.
Only his words remain,
Like the perfume of flowers that have fallen —”

I know the sorrow
Of that peasant girl in Louvain —
She was one
Who had bade adieu forever
To a valiant defender of France.

“ ‘*I love you!*’
He would say, so often
Under the trees by the garden gate —”

Whispering on the timorous air of night —
How often have her words
Strayed across our heartstrings!
How often do they stir the leaves of Yesterday
And the blossoms of Today;

AFTER THE DAY

From what dreaming vista
Has that yearning gone away —
Over what streams, confiding
When the moon swings low. . . .

It is the burden of the winds,
And the sorrow of the sea!

“ ‘*I love you!*’
He would say, so often —”

Memory brought only that,
And her heart fell, lost
Like a rose
In the Winter’s blowing.

“ ‘*I love you!*’—”

AFTER THE DAY

The Albatross

I SAW an albatross —
Dead, and the shifting sands
Sought to conceal
This too presumptuous sorrow,
Sought silently
To so engulf it, that the passing stars
Might shine ungrieved.

For all men know
The gray breath of the sea,
Know the storm's wrath, and its courier
That cries wild warning
To the shores of morn. . . .

I saw an albatross,
Dead, swollen, slowly floundered
By receding waters. I saw
Its body; I lost
That semblance of the dim, drenched heavens
Urging from cliff to cloud above
The unrest of the sea!

AFTER THE DAY

I missed the white, gleaming wing
Against my blue world;
The calm eye and lone, liquescent lilt
From opal crests; the dipping into these
For sudden, silvered treasure —
Revelling, rejoicing, reposing
In the wind's wake;
High feathering, low darting,
All finally to soar
Into arid silence, nightward seeking.

Long had it flown, long before me
Over the sad ocean, over the ruins
Of many a yesterday. . . .

I stood
In mute reverence
At that burial, by waters receding,
Under the passing stars.

AFTER THE DAY

Domesday

WHEREUPON a flame
Engulfed them,
And our land
Of long enchantment
Crumbled under fire
Terrific from retaliatory suns.

In torrid vapors
Broiled the seas and rivers of an outcast
world. . . .

Crawled they, rising like ebullient serpents,
Seething, commingling, merging moonward,
Leaping of red tongues, licking the spheres —
Writhing perilously on high;
Then rushed they down, in final cataracts,
To the last, phantasmagoric Abyss.

.

All pulseless were the tides,
And tottering to silence
Every avatar of Light:

AFTER THE DAY

The welkin had no cloud,
No morn its dew —

No tree found leaf
And verdure was refused,
And every bloom died unsought
On the sedge, and bough, and vine.

All heaven was abandoned;
The winds,
Once many voiced, continuous, and fair
Were fallen at hush —

Oceans ceased to stir,
And stagnant they lolled
Untremulous against the shores of Night.

*Only a laughter, infinite and wild,
Rang from the nocturnal peaks of Chaos.*

A laughter,
Sardonic and convulsed
With all the mad hyprocrisies of Time —

Rolling from no special height, nor plain,
Dismal, discorporate, wailing
Ribald at the nothingness of Doom.

AFTER THE DAY

There was no use for symphonies, and such,
Nor letters, nor the protoplasmic scheme
Of anything beneath the cindered stars.

What with wild wars
And devastated Hope
The evidence of Man
Had burned away;

Contestless, ruined, insensate
Was Creation;
Without our strange posterity —
And impotent, and cold.

The mirage of Life
Had been, but was no more.

*A fatal, overwhelming Dark
Prevailed,
And in the dark, that Laughter!*

AFTER THE DAY

*Amerongen Castle

PACING the garden
Of Amerongen Castle,
He walks continuously —
Up and down the graveled pathways
Of the grounds.

Bowed in reflection,
With his arms
Clasped behind him ;
Endless is his promenade —
Walking up and down the graveled pathways
Of Amerongen Castle.

Peasants go clattering along
The canal banks,
Down the verdant dykes and dunes of Holland —
Laughing a great deal in the sun,
Contented, loquacious ;

But on the far side of the wall
There is a man who does not laugh,

*“Amerongen” is a cryptic word, spelling One German. Re-arrange the letters, and see for yourself.

AFTER THE DAY

Who paces only the gardens
And who does not laugh.

The sun goes down
And the moon ascends,
And the peasants
Sing on the levee —
On the silver waters
The peasants are singing ;

But on the far side of the wall
There is a man who does not sing,
A man who walks
The graveled paths of Amerongen —
And who does not sing.

Nothing is more continuous, incessant, and per-
sistent
Than his walking —
Up and down, up and down,
From this gate, on to that,
From one wall to another.

Never will the thoughts of him
Still those footsteps for a moment,
Nor stay
The long march of his Conscience.

AFTER THE DAY

And as he paces
It is like a tread
On the dead hearts of men —
Treading with each step, treading
On a heart!

Bowed in reflection,
With his arms
Clasped behind him —
Over his brow comes a chilling,
Comes a throbbing, so continuous,
So incessant, and prolonged —
Up and down the graveled pathways
By Amerongen walls;

There are many hearts to pace there,
To account for, to absolve,
On the Castle's graveled pathways
By Amerongen walls. . . .

There are many steps to pace,
Ere the final Step.

AFTER THE DAY

The Sniper

HE told me this yarn, like a schoolboy,
While I bandaged his hand by the fire:

*“Boches! That’s what they were —
Five of us
Took their dug-out in the morning;
The fog
Was heavy over Chalons,
It wrapped the trenches in gray,
Clung to the wires, and dripped
From every broken tree. . . .*

*We heard them laughing,
And nobody can stand that, in the shivering
dawn!*

*Bind the gauze tightly, Sam,
Never mind the salve —*

*What’s a thumb, more or less?
I haven’t used mine
Since I was a baby;*

AFTER THE DAY

*Aw, stop looking so seriously —
It's a little thing!*

*Crawling, scarcely breathing,
Stopping, continuing under the entanglements—*

*So! Five grenades forward;
Mud, and moans, then 'Kamerad!'*

*Twenty of 'em, Sam,
Cringed against the gunnies!*

*It was easy work, we thought,
And filed away, when —*

*Well . . . what could I use it for?
Thumbs up, thumbs down —
Ha! ha! I guess I wasn't made to be
A Vestal Virgin!*

*We thought we had 'em all,
But a puff
Came over the clearing —
One of us
Stumbled forward —
Sudden blood
Bubbled from his ears,
And the sniper . . . had scored!*

AFTER THE DAY

*'Nevermind, pal; he'll pay!'
Again the puff, and a pang
Somewhere shoulderward —
But this time we saw his rifle
Gleam against the ridge;
Caught a glint of steel
In a first, faint ray
Of the sun!*

*We
Crouched, and waited.*

*Bill's helmet on the end of a stick
Was a good decoy —
The fool shot twice, then,
Shells gone, and frightened,
He stood up, raised his arms, and shouted
As those had done whom we spared:
'Kamerad!' 'Kamerad!'*

*'Kamerad, be damned!' said Bill.
So we pumped the full contents
Of our automatics —
Into his crumbling chest, into his rotten heart!''*

He told me this yarn, like a schoolboy,
While I bandaged his hand by the fire.

AFTER THE DAY

Passing in the Sun

TODAY
I saw them passing
In the sun —
The khakied ranks
And regiments of War.

I saw
An urgent multitude
Of friends, and the faces
Of parents anticipating —

I saw
Rejoicing, hearted women
And patient tears
Lo, laughing in their eyes. . . .

Today
I saw them passing
In the sun —
The moon declining, and low vestal stars
Beholden also, shone glimmering

AFTER THE DAY

Down the flower-flung streets
Gold garlanded, and silvern
To the clatter of their feet.

Today
I saw —
Somewhere he
Was marching. . . .

Dear Christ!
Though the night
Be nailed forever
To my cross —

Let his dawn
Bleed white with wings!

AFTER THE DAY

The Aviator

DUST, in clouds
Envelop their machines,
And the air burns, ' vibrating
With discordant cries —

Orders
From directing officers,
Calls to linemen,
Hurried explanations, a last shout
To the machinist. Final commands —
And then, farewell!

Over the low, shuddering grasses
His airplane jerks, jolting
To the utmost endurance.
He grips the wheel, plunging headlong.

Suddenly a wind
Lifts under the solitary man
And lo,
He is flying!

AFTER THE DAY

On the wide sward
Others are starting, and the sky
Reverberates with throbbing hearts,
With those strange, mechanical devices
Beating on, and on, while their iron bosoms
Heave and swell from the tumult
Of a carbureted soul. . . .

Presently, the mists foregather
Coming between. Gray waters
Roll far beneath —
All on the field, moments later
Become gnats, and disappear.

From a distance, the clutter of his companions
Sounds to him through cool spaces;
Soon the song of their metallic throats
Merges into whispering —
And is heard no more.

Life itself, is such a coursing
On lanes of azure —
And we are all
Solitary aviators!

Only, in this world-long race
One after another

AFTER THE DAY

Is outdistanced
By an ultimate few
Who are themselves deserted
In the final stretch —

By one
Who travels alone.

Long ago they left him,
The birdmen careening earthward —

Onward he drives, feathering
Through an icy, dim atmosphere.

Into the farthest ocean, shot by arrows
Of deepening shadow
Falls the wounded sun.

Illimitable night
In mystery and silence,
Closes around him —

Onward he goes, onward, onward.

AFTER THE DAY

Outriders of the Night

COURSING the roads at dayfall,
In the midmost dusk they pass —
The outriders of the Night.

I have seen them,
If you ask me —
From the gray heights of Vimy Ridge
I have seen them
Riding in the dawn,
And in the bleak immensities of Dark.

My dreams
Are fraught with spectral images —

I see old citadels, and gates
Of massive bronze unopened save to Kings;
Whereat comes One
According to the stars —
And lo, the locks, the idle bolts of Ages
Fall asunder in the gloom!

AFTER THE DAY

Who rides now,
Those ancient lanes of France?
Who strides the old, accustomed leagues
With dim cavalry, betimes,
Who leads the soldiery of other wars —
Whose whispers
Mingle in the day's late winds,
Whose armor is of shadow, whose eyes
Are glowless in the evening's enterprise?

She has entered Orleans,
Mounted, at the head of many horsemen, she
enters. . . .

It is vespersed twilight,
And the bells
Of phantom arches toll;

They draw rein before the cathedral,
Before those demolished walls —
That ruined pile
Touched by no glint of sun,
Nor any ray
Prevailing its lost corridors. . . .

For a long time
They remain —

AFTER THE DAY

While the shades
Lengthen, creep up, up,
With ghostly hands
Entreating some reprisal
For the dead!

I have heard their hoof-beats
In the silent, moon-dim valleys;
I have heard their chargers breathing . . . drink-
ing slowly . . .
By the cool waters of the Meuse.

I have seen them
Fleeing northward
From the Somme, from the Marne —
And the peasants at Ypres
Know them well,
The outriders of the Night!

Those who dwell
In gray huts
By the sea —
Have felt the presence
Of these tireless ones;

The fisherfolk at Calais
Will gather round you, and tell

AFTER THE DAY

How the dunes are forever murmuring of them,
And the airs, low-blowing shoreward.

Toilers of the nets, and lighthouse guards
Will speak of that darkest hour
When Paris was at prayer —
And what they heard, borne on the sudden
wind. . . .

Some call them the “angels” of the Marne
And some are mute, and there are others
With a fine glint in their eyes —
As if they, too,
Had seen sights, stranger than the gift of words
Will ever bring to men.

Coursing the roads at dayfall
In the midmost dusk they pass —
The outriders of the Night.

AFTER THE DAY

Le Strynge

S*INISTER, grimacing,
Laughing in the night,
You, on the balustrade of Notre Dame
Leering over the gargoyles,
From the parapet and eminence of Faith!*

You, O faithless One!
Believing not, and brooding
With quaint mendacity
Over the lights, and shades,
Over the pleasures, and the pain of Paris.

Long have I regarded you, Strynge!
A pagan
On the edifice of Christ;
Unsought, unseeking —
Mocking the years, and the tears of us!

There is a strange, lack lustre in your eyes —
A cold, forboding cynicism
On your grotesque lips.

AFTER THE DAY

In their shadow
What crawling minions pass,
Below you, pass in and out of the Church;
Always crossing your shadow,
Stepping into it, through it, out of it, and on.

Always below you, blots of men
In your shadow! Below
The strange, lack lustre in your eyes —
And the cynicism
On your grotesque lips.

Long have I regarded you, Strynge!
Unsought, unseeking —
Mocking the years, and the tears of us.

Are you not a pagan
On the edifice of Christ?

Are you waiting?

AFTER THE DAY

Anarchy

I SAW the statue of Liberty
Looming against New York.

I was a son of the plains,
I believed in prophecies —

And mine eyes brimmed
As the visions faded,
As our transport
Cleaved the waters of the wide Atlantic.

I am returning
And there it is again,
From my crutches I observe it —
Colossal, strange, and menacing ;

Alas, is it Liberty ?
I see a wanton, wild hag leering there —
Gaunt of figure, shrunk to despair,
And draped in the old habiliments of Crime.

AFTER THE DAY

From the drear sockets
Of her eyes
Glare the lamps of civilized Revolt,
Within the pent clutch of her hand
Smolders a bomb. . . .

See that long, emaciated arm
Uplifted through the gloom,
And the torch
Flaring its lurid challenge to the sky!

AFTER THE DAY

Post Mortem

I AM become an inmate
Of man's ancient habitude!
Dead, with the aid of Krupp —
And a pale subaltern named Schnitzler.

Maddened by the sting of his rifle,
I flung my tent-ax deep in his chest. . . .
But an automatic had something to say,
So I am here.

Dead! And the stars are sentinels,
Always constant, never failing,
Hovering ever, ever gleaming
Over my stark remains!

My teeth . . . only my teeth
Gleam back at them
From the wide, Somme prairie.

AFTER THE DAY

Court Martial

(Guilty)

NO one in the regiment
Regards me as a deserter —
But you know otherwise,
My lonely one!

I left you lately
For the love of War,
Honor became my mistress
And a battlefield was our bed.

I have been promoted for loyal conduct,
And no one knows
Nor thinks, nor cares
For the broken camp, and the pledge we plighted
Under the vines at home!

AFTER THE DAY

Coup d'Etat

PEACE! Ah, there's a word!
Now tell me, you who juggle:
Have those nimble necromancers at Versailles
Made it a just peace,
Or just peace?

This is no trick, I assure you;
It's diplomacy!
And by that you may see
How a word divides
The false aim from the true.

Yet in such difference
Lies our destiny.

AFTER THE DAY

De Profundis

THE world expected so much of me,
That in desperate attempts
To forget,
My heart was pierced
And disconsolate,
My soul fled into the Night.

The world expected so much of me,
And insisted
For so many years,
That from urgent endeavor
My lids have drooped —
So now I lie in the dust.

AFTER THE DAY

The Great War

Prologue:

TELL you the story
Of the Great War?

Be sure, my friends,
It is no easy task —
In so brief time,
In such confining space.

Much may pass untold,
Yet grant me leave!

A shot
Was fired one day
At Sarajevo, and I would tell you
How it wounded half the world —
If I but may:

1914

June 28.

The Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Aus-
tria

AFTER THE DAY

Is assassinated on this date,
Which disposes of a successor
To the throne of Karl.

July 5

The Crown Council of Germany
Meets at Potsdam
And decides on war.

July 28

Austria declares war
On Serbia.

August 1.

Germany declares war on Russia
And invades Luxemburg
And Belgium.

August 3.

Germany declares war on France.

August 4.

Great Britain declares war on Germany.

August 25.

Germans destroy Louvain,
And massacre the inhabitants.

AFTER THE DAY

September 1.

German troops reach the outskirts
Of Paris.

September 6.

The battle of the Marne
Is fought in which the French
Force the Germans
To retreat to the Aisne River.

December 24.

The first German air raid
Is made on England.

1915

May 7.

The Lusitania is torpedoed
By a German submarine.

May 23.

Italy declares war on Austria.

August 20.

Italy declares war on Turkey.

October 12.

Edith Cavell is shot
By Germans in Brussels.

AFTER THE DAY

1916

February 21.

The German attacks on Verdun begin.

"They shall not pass!"—Petain.

April 19.

An American ultimatum

Is sent to Germany,

Threatening to break off relations

Unless American ships

Go unmolested.

May 31.

The Germans are defeated

In a naval battle off Jutland.

August 27.

Roumania declares war on Germany.

August 28.

Italy declares war on Germany.

1917

January 31.

Germany announces

Ruthless submarine warfare.

AFTER THE DAY

February 3.

The United States
Breaks off diplomatic relations
With Germany.

April 6.

The United States
Declares war on Germany.
“*Make the world safe for Democracy!*”
—Wilson.

June 26.

The first American troops
Land in France.
“*Lafayette, we are here!*”—Pershing.

June 29.

Greece declares war on Germany.

December 9.

Jerusalem is captured
By the British.
“*The law of Force
Must yield to the force of Law!*”—Allenby.

AFTER THE DAY

1918

March 3.

The Brest-Litovsk Treaty.

“Germany at her worst!”—Haig.

March 21.

The great German Offensive begins.

“In Paris by the first of April!”

—Hindenburg.

April 14.

General Foch is appointed commander-in-chief

Of the Allied Armies.

May 27

The last great German drive

Is begun on Paris.

They reach the Marne again.

June 6.

The American marines

Smash back at Chateau Thierry

Marking the turning point

Of the war.

AFTER THE DAY

June 7.

General Omar Bundy
An American commander,
Refuses the French order
To retreat.

June 23.

The Italians
Drive the Austrians
Back from their lines
To a flight across the Piave
With losses totaling one hundred fifty thousand soldiers.

July 12.

French and American forces
Break the German Offensive
North of Cantigny.

July 18.

Marshal Foch
Begins his great counter-attack.

August 6.

German "75-mile" guns
Kill civilians in Paris.

AFTER THE DAY

August 25.

British battalions
Cross the Hindenburg line
North of the Scarpe.

September 2.

The United States
Recognizes the Checho-Slovak Nation.

September 12.

The First American Army
Takes fifteen thousand prisoners
At St. Mihiel salient.

September 22.

British forces
Trap the entire Turkish Army
In Palestine.

September 30.

Bulgaria lays down arms.

October 18.

The Germans are driven back
From the Belgian Coast.

AFTER THE DAY

October 24.

The troops of Italy
Launch a victorious offensive.
Against Austria.

October 30.

Turkey surrenders.

November 3.

Austria surrenders.

November 7.

General Pershing
Leads an American division
To the capture of Sedan.

November 9.

The Kaiser of Germany
Abdicates and departs for Holland.

November 11.

Germany surrenders
To an Allied Armistice.

Miscellaneous

AFTER THE DAY

I Saw a Dead Man

I SAW a dead man in the night,
His body stark, his visage damp
With chilling dews; I saw his hands
That bore a rifle rigid quite,
And medals on his chest, the lamp
Of Heaven traced by lunar strands.

I saw a dead man in the night,
His blackened jowls, his sunken eyes,
The blood-clots on his matted hair.
I saw his uniform; the light
Of outraged stars gleamed with surmise
Against his teeth, against his stare.

I saw a dead man in the night,
His pallid silence, and the cold
Of lifelessness creep over him;
I saw his sabre, and the slight
Wound mine had made. I saw unfold
The wings of Death to cover him.

AFTER THE DAY

I saw a dead man in the night,
 Whose spirit long departed made
 Of human semblance nothingness;
I saw his shadow, and the might
 Of untold comrades marching, fade
 From earth to God. *Ah, Life were less!*

AFTER THE DAY

On Duty

I HEARD the tread o' soldier feet
On withered leaves, an' dry.

"Halt, an' give the Countersign —

Who goes there?" hollers I.

"*British Ambulance Corps!*"

Was the Sergeant's prompt reply.

"Pass, British Ambulance Corps!"

An' "All is well!" says I;

So shoulderin' me gun, I watched

The Tommies marchin' by.

Again the tread o' soldier feet

That night (the moon was high) —

"Halt, an' give the Countersign,

"Who goes there?" hollers I.

"*French Ambulance Corps!*"

Was the Sergeant's prompt reply.

"Pass, French Ambulance Corps!"

An' "All is well!" says I;

AFTER THE DAY

So shoulderin' me gun, I watched
The Poilus marchin' by.

I've told ye wat the Sergeants said,
An' my woids wat were mine —
(I follows post-instructions, an'
I never miss a line!)

Along th' Wypers road at night
The shells was burstin', say —
(I seen more killed from dark to dawn
Than ever died by day!)

An ups an' down the Avenoo
The stretcher-bearers passed,
From dawn to dark, and dark to dawn
Wid wounded, dead, an' gassed.

“*Mon Dieu!*” I thinks the Commandmant
Would say, an' so did I,
When, once again, the tread o' feet
On withered leaves, an' dry.

“Halt, an' give the Countersign —
“Who goes there?” hollers I.
“*None of your damn business!*”
Was the Sergeant's prompt reply.

AFTER THE DAY

“Pass, American Ambulance Corps!”

An’ “All is well!” says I;
So shoulderin’ me gun, I watched
The Yankees marchin’ by!

AFTER THE DAY

In a Belgian Prison

THIS is that dread hour
Of the rising moon,
Four thund'rous years ago —
A night in June.

Here, where the lurking twilight creeps
Through garden ferns,
And shadows clasp ghost-fingers on
The ivyed urns;

Here, where a festive Belgian sings
His joyous lay,
And lovers' hearts beat to the drums
The Allies play —

Here, I forever damned my soul:
O'er fields of dire
Unhallowed troops I flew, a Spy
With word to fire!

This is that dread hour
Of the rising moon,
Four thund'rous years ago —
A night in June.

AFTER THE DAY

In the Shadows

IT stands, a dark and melancholy tree
Leaf-lorn beside the sorrow of that land;
Somewhere against a gray, enshrouded
strand

Echo nocturnes sighing from the sea
Of days that pass; and in far Normandy
Fair winds have died on grieving drifts
of sand —

Somewhere in Flanders there's a shadowed
Hand,
Somewhere in France, a broken fleur-de-lis!

O night of Nations! When men's voices leap
Athwart Titanic gulfs, and Tyrant power
Hath rolled away like thunder from the Deep
What cry shall rise in that wide, wondrous
hour:

Behold, against the sky for all to see —
A lonely crucifix on Cavalry!

AFTER THE DAY

A Cashmere Song

*O SAMAR! Sing to me of swans at eve
And sleeping orchids where the twilight falls*

*On cadenced water, murmuring at dusk
A requiem beside the Palace walls —*

*How in these dark and soundless gardens strayed
Two mystic friends discoursing on their loves*

*At sundown, while an amber, crescent moon
Climbed starward o'er the Maharaja's groves!*

*“One was a King, who secretly had yearned
Long years for that oft promised by the
Rose,
And one a Prince of Yesterday who came
From rivers where the Scarlet Poppy blows.*

*“O King, in sanguine conquest I have tried
By feat of Battle, and the glint of swords*

AFTER THE DAY

To vanquish eager armies of thy foes —
To humble to thy knee, the foreign Lords!

“ ‘My Prince,’ the King replied, ‘thou speakest
well,

Yet it is vain. The bloom of Hope is past —
A mighty wind hath smote the tree of Eld
And lo, its leaves lie scattered in the blast!

“ ‘From out the West, beyond engulfing seas,
Bronze legions plunge undaunted, and no
dread

Nor any horror quells their clamoring;
O Allah! Peace be with them! War is
dead. . . .’

“No word was uttered more. The cypress paths
A deep, sequestered whispering renewed;
Whereat they vanished, and the voiceless gloom
Mantled again that ancient solitude.

“What dust cries to the years! Those Palace
walls

Have crumbled into silence and decay;
No swans at twilight float among the reeds —
And orchids, poppies, all have blown
away!

AFTER THE DAY

“Both King and Prince in closing mists have
passed

Along the shadowed corridor of dreams . . .”

*O Samar! Thou art bathed in dawning light —
Sing of a sorrow by forgotten streams!*



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